

## Infectious diseases expert weighs in on monkeypox spread

BY HELEN ADAMS

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As the number of diagnosed monkeypox cases in South Carolina nears 100, an infectious diseases expert at MUSC Health predicts many more to come. "This is clearly not a containable infection. People are living their lives and getting diagnosed haphazardly, and we're likely missing many milder and less symptomatic infections right and left. And there probably have already been hundreds, if not thousands, of cases in South Carolina," said Scott Curry, M.D.

The first cases of monkeypox in the state were confirmed just last month. Curry said the disease is likely to become endemic, meaning it will stick around. There are a few factors he pointed to.

First, according to Curry, "There are – even in 2022 – stigmas and care access issues for men who have sex with men in South Carolina."

Second, there hasn't been enough vaccine to go around, although that situation is being eased some by using smaller but still effective doses.

Third, it can be tough to qualify to get tested in some parts of South Carolina. For now, testing is only available through public health labs and five commercial labs. MUSC Health will start doing its own testing once regulations allow for it.

Curry said in the meantime, local officials at the Department of Health and Environmental Control are making the testing situation as easy as they can for him and his colleagues. "Dr. Richardson has very generously said, 'If an MUSC doctor thinks that a case needs to be sent to the DHEC lab, it gets sent.'" Katy Richardson, M.D., leads the

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Curry



Photo by Jonathan Coultas

A dozen MUSC faculty members were recognized for excellence in teaching, research and clinical care and three clinicians for distinguished faculty service in their careers at MUSC. MUSC President David J. Cole and provost Lisa Saladin served as Aug. 16 event hosts.

## Faculty 'champions' launch school year with 2022 Colbert Lecture, Faculty Awards

BY CINDY ABOLE

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It was a festive homecoming as MUSC faculty gathered for the third James W. Colbert Lecture and Faculty Awards and Recognition Ceremony on Aug. 16 at the Drug Discovery Auditorium. This annual event celebrates faculty from all six colleges and Academic Affairs for their outstanding contributions to teaching, research and clinical practice.

Bethany Wolf, Ph.D., MUSC Faculty Senate president, welcomed the crowd of honorees, leaders, deans, faculty

and staff members and visitors. Provost Lisa K. Saladin, PT, Ph.D., provided opening remarks as well.

"It is the people that make an institution or organization great, and MUSC is no different. It is our faculty, our students and our staff that distinguish us as a top-tier university and health system. Today, we take this opportunity to express our appreciation. I hope all of you recognize the impact that you have on others. Our educators impact our students: You inspire them, motivate them and guide their futures. Our clinicians impact the health of our patients every day and shape the health of our communities:

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## Board recognized COVID-19 efforts, updates on comprehensive cancer center status, yearly highlights

MUSC and Medical University Hospital Authority (MUHA) Board of Trustees held their regularly scheduled committee sessions and board meeting on Aug. 11 and 12, respectively. The trustees voted unanimously to reelect James Lemon, D.M.D., as chairman and Charles Schulze as vice chairman for another two-year term.

After 2-1/2 years of leading innovation, treating patients and providing expertise at the state level, related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lemon formally recognized a group of care team members for their roles in delivering on testing and vaccination efforts across South Carolina.

“These individuals represent an entire team of people who have gone above and beyond to lead us through the COVID-19 pandemic, and we wanted to formally recognize them here today,” Lemon said. “We thank you for your incredible service to MUSC and the state of South Carolina.”

As part of Thursday’s committee meeting schedule, board members visited the MUSC Hollings Cancer Center to learn more about the journey to comprehensive National Cancer Institute (NCI) status. Hollings physician-scientists discussed their research to develop innovative therapies that are more effective, with fewer side effects, and have the potential to treat patients who might not have other treatment options. Board members had the opportunity to tour lab spaces, including the Translational Science Lab, which facilitates the translation of basic science research into the clinic. The board also heard about Hollings’ work in clinical trials and the cancer center’s success in recruiting a demographically representative sample of the state’s population into these important studies. In addition, nurse leaders discussed the increasing volume of patients who need access to care, and the center’s physical therapist discussed an innovative program to



Photo by Sarah Pack

**At the latest meeting, the MUSC Board of Trustees recognized a group of MUSC Health care team members for their dedication, commitment and service with testing and vaccination efforts during COVID-19.**

integrate physical therapy into cancer care to mitigate some of the side effects of treatment.

David J. Cole, M.D., FACS, MUSC president, provided board members with a year in review report (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) detailing numerous “wins” across the education, research and clinical missions of the institution. Some specific highlights included a consistent, strong showing in several annual U.S. News & World Report “Best of” rankings, the MUSC College of Medicine receiving a full eight-year LCME (Liaison Committee on Medical Education) accreditation, an update on the highly anticipated opening of the new College of Pharmacy, a successful first year for the new MUSC Health-Midlands Division and recent affiliation

agreements with Greenwood Genetic Center, Lexington Medical Center and Anderson Regional Medical Center.

“I just wanted to take a moment and provide my heartfelt thanks to our MUSC board and the entire MUSC family for all of the incredible work and support during this past year,” Cole said. “We’ve been able to do three things simultaneously and successfully as an enterprise during the past two years that have set us clearly on a path of growth, transformation and change – we provided care and leadership through COVID; continued our day jobs as a leading academic health system; and, remarkably, charted our course for the future rather than sitting in a state of stasis induced by COVID crisis response. These truths make me very proud of our organization, and the 25,000-plus individuals who have made all of this possible; I doubt many institutions can claim the same progress.”

Kate Azizi, vice president for Institutional Advancement, said that the annual fundraising goal for the enterprise was exceeded, with the team reaching 120% of its \$65 million goal, bringing in \$78 million for FY 2022. Philanthropic support impacted all areas of the MUSC mission.

“This is due to the incredible generosity of our donors and the engagement of our innovative and expert faculty, researchers, leaders, and clinicians,” she said. “We were also incredibly pleased to exceed our cash goal, breaking a record for the MUSC Foundation. These donations are having immediate, positive impact across MUSC to quite literally change what’s possible for everyone we serve.”

The MUSC/MUHA Board of Trustees serves as separate bodies to govern the university and hospital, normally holding two days of committee and board meetings six times a year.



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Letter from the  
Office of the

# PROVOST

Dear MUSC students,

As we officially kick off the beginning of a new academic year, it is my pleasure to welcome our new MUSC students who started this summer and fall semester. Congratulations on your acceptance to MUSC, and thank you for choosing MUSC for your education. We are committed to providing each of you with an excellent education, a safe environment, and the support necessary to help you reach your goals.

I also want to extend a warm "welcome back" to those of you returning this semester to continue your education! I hope you all enjoyed the summer and took time to relax and refresh as you prepared for the coming semester.

As you begin this academic year, I encourage you to strive to maintain a healthy lifestyle and carve out time for activities that reduce stress. Caring for yourselves should be a constant goal to help you manage stress and overcome difficult situations. I know that this is easier said than done, but it is critical to your physical and mental health and, potentially, to your ultimate success.

We would not be the Medical University of South Carolina without you – our students. You are central to our mission and our vision for the future. I look forward to working with you as you write the next chapters of your personal stories and as we work together to create a better MUSC.

*Lisa K. Saladin, PT, Ph.D.*

*Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost*



**Saladin**



*Photo by Jonathan Coultas*

**Third-year College of Pharmacy students received their clinical white coats on Aug. 12 marking the start of clinical rotations in their training.**

## A letter from the SGA president

Welcome back, fellow students! I am honored to serve as the president of the MUSC Student Government Association and represent our student body. I have served in student government all four years I have been a student at MUSC, and every year has been drastically different. As students, we have experienced changes in our education and the scope of health care in recent years, and I am proud of how our student body has overcome the challenges we have faced. No matter how long you have been a student at MUSC, I appreciate your dedication to your education and the world of health care.

Through the ups and downs, MUSC Student Government Association has worked diligently to advocate for students, improve the student experience and provide meaningful and safe opportunities to network and learn. We have been working hard to integrate historically popular events with newfound favorites to provide you with the best student experience. Our general body representatives have served tirelessly to ensure your voice is heard and provide you with the most up-to-date information.

The MUSC Student Government Association comprises representatives from all six colleges and is dedicated to serving students. Through networking and social events, service opportunities and culturally diverse experiences, we strive to provide you with the most valuable student experience. It is our honor and responsibility to be your advocate to the administration and communicate important information to the student body. With advancement and familiarity with virtual communication, we are better prepared to represent campus and distance learners more effectively than before. No matter where you are, please know that the SGA is here to serve you and be the student's voice. Speak with your representative or reach out to our executive board if you have any feedback, suggestions or concerns you would like us to discuss.

There are many exciting experiences and opportunities on the horizon for our students, and we cannot wait to celebrate all that is to come this year. Whether you are studying near or far, I hope this school year is filled with a wealth of new knowledge and personal growth.

In service,

*Mackenzie Long*

*2022-2023 SGA President*

*College of Dental Medicine, Class of 2023*



**Long**



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Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School  
Senior Physician at Brigham And Women's Hospital

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<https://hollingscancercenter.musc.edu/research/education/lowvelo-trainee-symposium>



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# Experts see ‘very concerning’ decrease in kids who are fully vaccinated

By HELEN ADAMS

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During an event at the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital honoring vaccination heroes – medical professionals and local volunteers who help to ensure their communities are protected – the director of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control voiced a worry they all share. “I can tell you on a statewide level, we have seen a decrease in the number of children who are fully vaccinated, and that is very concerning for us,” said Edward Simmer, M.D.

Allison Eckard, M.D., division chief for pediatric infectious diseases at MUSC, said one cause is clear. “The pandemic caused some downstream effects that probably nobody would’ve anticipated. And one of those things is that there are many more people now skeptical of vaccines cause of the misinformation that many people have listened to for the last year and a half. And unfortunately what we have seen now are people hesitant to get all vaccines.”

Simmer said that could lead to an uptick in preventable illness. “We’ve had cases of measles here in South Carolina; we’ve seen significant outbreaks elsewhere. We just saw a case of polio disease in New York. We thought we had pretty much wiped it out. Fifty, 60 years ago, polio was paralyzing many children. It was a terrible disease, and the vaccine has basically wiped that out. But again, it only works if people get it. And, and you know, that case, the polio we saw in New York, really scares me because that could happen here too.”

He called vaccines one of the most important interventions public health officials have. “We should never forget that even in these difficult discussions about vaccines that we’ve heard, vaccines are incredible scientific discoveries; they save lives. They’re incredibly safe,” Simmer said.

“The CDC estimates that just over the past 20 years, vaccinations have prevented more than 20 million children from being hospitalized. As we recognize South Carolina Immunization Awareness Week, I want to encourage everyone to think about how fortunate we are to have access to these great vaccines and the opportunity to make sure that we and our families are protected against infectious disease.”

That passion for the protection people can get from vaccines was clear in the words of every speaker at the event in the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital. Beth Sundstrom, Ph.D., serves as communication director for the South Carolina Immunization Coalition.

“The coalition unites vaccination champions to implement evidence-based practices and strategies that enhance the uptake of vaccines through action-oriented collaboration. Many of us missed crucial vaccines during the pandemic, especially preteens who need protection from meningitis, HPV cancers and whooping cough. So as we prepare for a healthy start to a new school year back to school, vaccinations are more important than ever to get back on track and protect our families and communities,” Sundstrom said.

Youlanda Gibbs, Ed.D., CEO and founder of the Palmetto Palace, works to protect families and communities, too. She described the moment she realized her organization, which has



Photo by Sarah Pack

**Dr. Allison Eckard speaks at the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital about the importance of vaccinations.**

*“The coalition unites vaccination champions to implement evidence-based practices and strategies that enhance the uptake of vaccines through action-oriented collaboration.”*

**Beth Sundstrom Ph.D.**

a mobile health unit, could play a role during the pandemic.

“I was sitting at home reading numerous articles about how many residents in rural areas of our Tri-county and in South Carolina were struggling to access a vaccine, for some traveling to neighboring cities, without transportation. And for others, public transportation was not an option.” She decided her mobile health unit could fill the void. It did, getting COVID-19 vaccines to people across the state.

Alexandra Hayes, organizing director of the South Carolina Immunization Coalition, shared a bold wish as she prepared to give out awards to vaccination heroes at the Aug. 19 event. “One day, we will live in a world where no child will suffer or die from a disease ever. This is the vision.”

## **South Carolina Immunization Coalition’s 2022 South Carolina Immunization Awareness Week Awards**

- Mary Beattie, RN, was honored for her work promoting HPV vaccination in the Cherokee County School District, earning the honor of Coalition Partner of the Year.
- Allison Eckard, M.D., was the Advocacy Award winner, a doctor who, in Hayes’ words “never wavered as a physician champion.”
- Youlanda Gibbs, Ed.D., was the 2022 Leadership Award winner and National Immunization Champion Award winner for Palmetto Palace’s community outreach during the pandemic.
- Hanahan’s Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department won the Community Collaboration Award for its work vaccinating the public against COVID-19.
- Beth Sundstrom, Ph.D., earned the Innovation Award for a range of efforts to find the most effective ways to communicate with the public about important issues and use them to drive up vaccination rates statewide.

# Despite COVID, Class of 2022 PAS grads celebrate success through challenges

By CINDY ABOLE

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It was a balmy afternoon on Aug. 12 when MUSC students Natalie Penny Saunders and Johnathon Tucker, garbed in their black graduation regalia, waited somewhat nervously to line up alongside their fellow classmates inside the vestibule of Seacoast Church Mount Pleasant. The students had been waiting for this moment – their class graduation – to celebrate the culmination of their own academic journeys and personal resilience over the past two-plus years while becoming MUSC's newest cohort of Physician Assistant Studies (PAS) graduates.

Ninety-three men and women made up the PAS Class of 2022 working through seven semesters during the COVID-19 pandemic, completing 27-months of virtual classes and

clinical experiences.

For Saunders and others, the experience can best be described as a roller coaster ride – complete with highs and lows – that ultimately ended on a high note. She and 32 classmates within their graduating class were among a group of Lenoir Rhyne (LR) University Physician Assistant (PA) students who transferred into MUSC's PAS program in spring of 2020 after their program closed, giving these students a home to continue their studies and clinical training and fulfill their dreams of becoming capable health care providers.

Helen Martin, DHS, PA-C, the PAS program director, has been foundational to these students' successes. Having been a former PA faculty member at Lenoir-Rhyne in 2013, Martin advocated for the students after learning that the LR voluntarily withdrew its accreditation with the Accreditation Review



*Photo by Cindy Abole*

**Class of 2022 PAS graduate Natalie Saunders, far left, hopes to land a job in emergency medicine in her hometown of Hickory, North Carolina. Here, she celebrates with fellow grads Hannah Scheffer and Katy Schlappi.**

Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant – the country's accrediting body for PAS programs. At the same time, she had been part of discussions with college faculty and MUSC leadership to expand MUSC's PAS class size and saw accepting the L-R

students into the fold as a potential solution. The class suddenly grew from 60 to 94 students by May of 2020, the start of didactic training.

*See GRADUATES on page 6*



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GRADUATES *Continued from Page Five*

“This has been an amazing experience for this class of students, our PA faculty and staff – everyone,” said Martin. “The COVID-19 pandemic touched all of our lives in some way, but our students and faculty dealt with it and came together nicely. I’m so proud of each of them.”

A native of Blythewood, South Carolina, Tucker echoed the remarkable support he received from classmates, faculty and staff throughout his experience. “MUSC’s PA faculty and staff did a good job despite the circumstances caused by the pandemic. Things happened so quickly. None of us expected our classes and training would be virtual, but the faculty, staff and institution made it work. It truly was a learning experience for everyone,” said Tucker.

Not only did this cohort, faculty and staff learn to adjust to an expanded class size, but the faculty members worked hard to provide the best and safest learning experience for their students. Online teaching and learning and Zoom meetings were the norm, as was the case with all MUSC programs during the early part of COVID. Although challenging at times, Saunders and Tucker completed almost all of their didactic courses virtually. Saunders was among a small group of LR transfer students who elected to stay in North Carolina — driving four-hours to Charleston several times to complete the Clinical Skills Lab training in the school’s new PAS facility lab space as well as clinical competency exams with standardized patients.

For PAS clinical rotations, the program required students to complete nine rotations: internal medicine, family medicine, women’s health, pediatrics, mental health, emergency medicine, surgery, adjunct clinical experience and an elective experience. This cohort had a rare opportunity to be placed in clinical experiences with preceptors at site locations that previously partnered with LR’s PA program, so many of the LR transfer students were able to complete some clinical experiences near their hometowns.

Saunders, who worked as a paramedic prior to PA school, completed five of her rotations near her hometown of Hickory, North Carolina, and four in South Carolina. She did two emergency medicine rotations around Hickory and also in Morganton, North Carolina.

“It was exhilarating – the best experience where I got to work on a variety of emergency cases, from inserting central lines, intubation and cardiac arrest patients. For this experience, I felt more like a colleague rather than a student working with a preceptor. I definitely know this is what I want to do,” said Saunders, who awaits a job offer in emergency medicine around the Hickory area.

Tucker had similar success in his clinical rotation experiences. He completed two psychiatry rotations – the last one working at Charleston MyNDSPACE Mental Health, a mental health education and consulting group, where he hopes to work full time.

Perhaps the toughest part of the students’ experiences was the challenge of safely developing relationships with fellow students, faculty and staff. Before the pandemic, PAS students would typically see each other during or after class, or they would study, volunteer and socialize together – providing lots of opportunities for them to develop friendships and bond



Photos Provided

**Class of 2022 Physician Assistant Studies students participated in last year’s celebration of PA Week by sharing their motivations for entering the field.**

naturally. Not so much during COVID.

“We all tried our best to stay interactive with each other as classmates,” Tucker explained, referring to Zoom breakaway class and study groups, Facetime calls and some safe in-person small gatherings that were organized. “At times, it didn’t feel as if we were as close as it could have been had it not been for the pandemic. Despite this, COVID drew us closer in a special way so that we could complete the program and go through this experience together.”

Reflecting back on their time at MUSC, Saunders and Tucker are both happy and grateful.

“I’ll always feel that MUSC conducted the virtual transition to online learning better than any school could have done. The faculty did their best in the situation, and I felt their didactic teaching and training helped me prepare well for my clinical experiences,” Saunders said.

Martin, their program director, agreed. “This was one tough, strong group of students. They did well and achieved even when the odds were against them,” she said.

For Saunders, graduation was like coming full circle – closing a loop in her journey. On graduation day, she relished the opportunity to hug former LR PA professor Joshua Stone, Ph.D., who also transferred to MUSC to join the PAS faculty, in addition to other program faculty for their hard work, dedication and support.

“I will always have that memory and photo of Dr. Stone on my left, a professor that was present when I began my PA journey, and Dr. Martin, on my right, another professor who gave me and others from LR a chance to continue on our journeys and help us fulfill our dreams. They, and all the MUSC faculty and staff and fellow students made an impact on me, and I’ll always be grateful to them,” Saunders said.

MEET NOUR



Nour Hijazi

**College and how long at MUSC**  
*MSTP Program; Five years – Third year of medical school*

**How are you changing what’s possible at MUSC**  
*By exploring the mechanisms underlying liver fibrosis, a condition that affects millions of people around the world, and contributing scientific knowledge that aids in the development of anti-fibrotic medications*

**Music that’s in your player now**  
*“Abbey Road” by the Beatles*

**Best thing about living in Charleston**  
*The Art Walk, which happens on the first Friday of each month. It’s a great way to explore the city and be introduced to work from talented local and international artists.*

**Greatest moment in your life**  
*Successfully defending my Ph.D. dissertation on July 25. It was very heartening to see the fruition of all my work over the past four years.*

**Favorite place in the world** *My hometown of Beirut, Lebanon.*

# State-of-the-art dental clinic opens in MUSC Health West Ashley Medical Pavilion

BY HELEN ADAMS

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A state-of-the-art dental and oral health center has become the 22nd specialty in the MUSC Health West Ashley Medical Pavilion, a sign of the site's stunning evolution. The pavilion opened in the former Citadel Mall in late December 2019, a month before the first diagnosed case of COVID in the U.S. — not exactly ideal timing.

But the pavilion has thrived despite that, seeing 64,000 patients last year alone. The addition of the dental clinic brings the expertise of MUSC's James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine to the most populous part of Charleston.

"This is such an example of farsightedness," Dr. James B. Edwards' widow, Ann, said at the ribbon cutting.

Charleston's mayor, John Tecklenburg, agreed. "This is where the customer base is.

And although I certainly love and encourage folks to come downtown and enjoy all the things we have there, the concept of bringing our services to the citizens of West Ashley — that's what this overall center is all about," he said. "I think you'll be very successful."

The clinic has four treatment rooms, on-site imaging and a full-time dentist on site, with MUSC faculty members who specialize in dental medicine coming to see patients as well. The dean of the dental school, Sarandeep Huja, D.D.S, Ph.D., said the clinic will focus on patients' needs and the needs of the collaborative services dictated by existing MUSC Health patients.

"In addition to outstanding dental care, eventually we'll have all specialties and we'll have all levels of care — faculty, residents, our students, and it's really important for our students to experiences akin to what they would in private practice."

Paul Davis, D.M.D and a member of



Photo by Sarah Pack

**Dr. Sarandeep Huja, dean of the James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine, walks Dr. Edwards' widow, Mrs. Ann Edwards, to a podium to speak at a ceremony celebrating the opening of a dental clinic in West Ashley.**

the MUSC Board of Trustees, spoke of the foresight that led to the clinic's creation. "Today's ceremony represents a milestone that began with a vision from Dr. Huja and his team, a vision that has been shared and

supported by Dr. Cole and Dr. Cawley and MUSC Health," he said, referring to MUSC President David Cole, M.D., and

See **DENTAL** on page 11



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PHOTOGRAPHY

# MUSC Health Midlands celebrates first anniversary

By **HELEN ADAMS**  
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Things were warm in more ways than one on a steamy August day as the MUSC Health-Midlands Division celebrated its first anniversary. There were hugs and smiles and applause as people gathered in Midlands' four locations to mark the occasion.

"Now, we're part of the family," said Pam Roberts, lab director for MUSC Health Kershaw Medical Center. It's one of four sites that make up the Midlands Division. The other three are MUSC Health Columbia Medical Center Downtown, MUSC Health Columbia Medical Center Northeast and MUSC Health Fairfield Emergency and Imaging.

"The laboratory had a complete makeover this past year. Being under a lab management contract since 2012, the lab care team members have always worked at Kershaw Health. Now we belong," Roberts said.

That feeling of belonging was echoed by Terry Gunn, chief executive officer of the Midlands Division. "The biggest change for our care team members has been a feeling of being brought into our forever home. We are so excited to be part of MUSC Health and look forward to anchoring the Midlands of

South Carolina. Our future is now bright, and we have a clear path on how we can better serve our communities."

He said patients are pleased, too. "There have been so many times that I've been stopped by people around our communities that have expressed their excitement around having MUSC in their community. Many have been long-term recipients of care at our physician practices and local facilities, and they are pleased we've infused stability and a strong future here."

MUSC Health bought the four sites in the Midlands Division as part of its quest to offer high-quality specialized care to people around the state. In 2019, hospitals in the Chester, Florence Lancaster and Marion areas joined MUSC Health.

Gunn said it's important to try to ensure everyone can get the care they need. "We truly want to serve the entire Midlands region, and we are able to do that with our expansive network of clinics, hospitals and emergency rooms. From Winnsboro to Camden and Elgin to West Columbia, we have the right providers and care team members in place to offer exceptional care. I think that is what is most exciting for our community. It doesn't matter where they live, they now have access to all MUSC has to offer."



*Photos by Kathryn Van Aernum*

**Susan Burroughs, associate chief executive officer for MUSC Health Columbia Medical Center Northeast, left, hugs Pam Roberts, director of the laboratory at MUSC Health Kershaw Medical Center.**



**Above photo: MUSC Health Fairfield Emergency and Imaging employees on the day of the anniversary celebration.**

**Right: Employees from MUSC Health Columbia Medical Center Downtown enjoy the Aug. 1 festivities.**





Photos by Kathryn Van Aernum

Employees gather at MUSC Health Columbia Center Northeast to celebrate.

Right photo: MUSC Health iced cookies were distributed at MUSC Health Fairfield Emergency and Imaging and other Midland facilities. Below: A timeline of first anniversary highlights of the MUSC Health-Midlands Division.



Above photo: Terry Gunn, CEO of the Midlands Division, speaks to employees at MUSC Health Columbia Medical Center Downtown.

Below: From left, Steve Shugart, chaplaincy director; Dr. Tallulah Holmstrom, chief medical officer of the Midlands Division; Dr. Mac Leppard; and Andrew Weems, hospice chaplain, celebrate while wearing MUSC Health blue.



## YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS MIDLANDS DIVISION



MUSC Health Columbia Medical Center Downtown's Dr. Michael Foster joins Melody Knapp at the celebration.

# Big changes to food, environmental services at MUSC Health statewide

By HELEN ADAMS

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Nephrologist Karim Soliman, M.D., usually works with nurses and techs as they help people suffering from serious kidney problems. But on a recent day in the main cafeteria at the MUSC Health University Hospital, it was Charleen Watson, supervisor of dietetic services, who came to his aid.

Soliman was using a new self-service checkout device for the first time to buy a mid-morning sandwich. Watson knew he might need her help. “A lot of people are getting used to the new machines and everything. It’s a work in progress,” she said.

Once Soliman had the hang of it, he liked it. “Convenient,” he said.

The self-service kiosks are among the more visible symbols of a big change affecting food and nutrition and environmental services across all of MUSC Health’s facilities. Food and nutrition includes not only what’s sold in those facilities but also patients’ meals and other aspects of healthy dining. Environmental services refers to professionally trained employees who clean and disinfect medical equipment, patient rooms and common areas.

Compass One Healthcare has become the provider of these services, replacing Sodexo at MUSC Health in Charleston and other vendors at other MUSC Health sites across the state.

Adam Bacik, associate chief operating officer for the Medical University of South Carolina, said it was a chance to leverage MUSC’s growth. “Because of the scale of our operation, we were able to save some costs while still enhancing services for our patients and care team members. There’s a lot of synergies by having all of the employees under one umbrella now so that we can resource our facilities differently.”

Another draw: Compass’ approach. “All the vendors we considered brought really fun and shiny toys and great food, and it looked great. But Compass really stood out as not selling us a service but wanting to partner with us on a service. Others just wanted to say, ‘You get what you pay for,’” Bacik said.

“Really, this is not about just having services today, but what does the service look like a year from now – or three years from now? And how do we continuously improve

through that process?”

Bacik said a specially selected team had the final say on whether to go with Compass. “It included COOs from all divisions, Dr. Susan Johnson from our Office of Health Promotion; it had our infection prevention team, to name a few. So this was truly a group effort making the decision on behalf of the entire health system.”

That group didn’t just focus on the services. It wanted to protect the employees who provide them. “A hundred percent of our contracted employees were offered employment with Compass One. A vast majority of them accepted that opportunity and still continue to serve MUSC. No positions were eliminated as a part of this in any of our markets,” Bacik said.

So that’s how the change came about. Here’s what else to expect.

## FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

As Soliman found when he bought his sandwich from a kiosk instead of a cashier, things are already starting to look different when it comes to food and nutrition services.

“You’ll start to see changes in the food service and retail options. Some of the facelift has already begun in the cafeteria area. There are new branded concepts highlighting certain food themes and diverse menu offerings,” Bacik said.

Case in point: In the MUSC Health University Hospital cafeteria, there’s a new calendar hanging on the wall by one entrance that shows different categories of food that will be featured throughout the month, ranging from okra to mac and cheese to fried chicken.

Bacik said Compass’ Morrison division, which handles its food and nutrition services, is also discussing bringing in more Lowcountry flavor. “They want to start partnering with local food providers and bring them into our kitchens and start having a rotating concept.”

More importantly, they want to ensure that employees on all shifts have access to good healthy food. “One thing that they’ll start to see is more self-serve food options. It’s a food market area where people will be able to grab and go, not only for people who work during the day, but also for our employees who are working nights and weekends. So that’s a new enhancement. That’s been a big thing lacking



Photo by Sarah Pack

**Dr. Karim Soliman, right, uses a self-service kiosk as dietetic services supervisor Charleen Watson watches.**

for our institution for some time.”

Employees will experience a temporary change involving one payment option for food and drinks, Bacik said. “Compass still offers a payroll deduction for food. But because of the OurDay install, which is happening in October, we were unable to get this part of the scope included in the initial changes.” OurDay is a new cloud-based platform designed to improve and integrate MUSC’s operational systems.

“So we’re having to temporarily pause the payroll deduction until the OurDay implementation finishes, and then we’ll go back to it. But in the interim, what they’re offering is what we call declining fund balance. An employee can prepay a defined amount from their debit card or credit card onto their badge and do the same thing. So badge swiping still exists. But as opposed to being funded by your paycheck, you preload it from a debit card or a credit card.”

Patients will see changes in their food and nutrition options, too. “They can order on tablets and iPads. So we’re moving more to electronic ordering, and that’s integrated with EPIC, our electronic medical records system. So we get the nutrition orders from our doctors linked to the food orders patients make.”

## ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Compass’ Crothall division, which leads its environmental services work, bills itself as an industry leader in innovation and reducing hospital-acquired infections.

Environmental services workers are often seen as the unsung heroes of hospitals. They not only follow rigorous standards in cleaning, they’re also responsible for doing everything possible to reduce the risk of infections spreading in hospitals, Bacik said.

“We see it as a partnership, trying to make sure that we have clean facilities. Infection prevention is very important. A lot of detail goes into cleaning our spaces and keeping them clean. So a lot of, from a regulatory perspective, a lot of different items needed to be ironed out in this transition. So a lot of work there that kind of goes unnoticed. But I think that’s probably good to some degree.”

If it’s unnoticed, it means the work is going smoothly, Bacik said. But what is often noticed, however, is the way environmental services specialists interact with patients. Those contacts are an important part of ensuring that people feel comfortable and in good hands in the hospital. Learning how to interact with patients is part of Compass’ environmental services training.

Compass began managing all food and nutrition and environmental services on Aug. 1. Watson, the dietetic services supervisor who’s been helping people navigate the self-service kiosks in the cafeteria, said it’s off to a good start in her area.

“I love it. It makes our lines go by faster – we don’t have the long lines like we used to. It’s convenient, especially for the people who only have 30 minute breaks. They don’t have to stand in a cash line anymore. They can use the kiosk.”

# Undergrads focus on cancer during summer at Hollings

BY LESLIE CANTU

cantul@musc.edu

The next generation — young people eager to contribute to science and their communities — were in MUSC Hollings Cancer Center laboratories this summer, learning from researchers who have devoted their careers to uncovering the mysteries of cancer.

A dozen of these undergraduates were part of a special program that introduces underrepresented minorities to cancer research, especially research into the cancers that have the greatest racial disparities in South Carolina: breast, prostate, head and neck and cervical cancer.

As part of the South Carolina Cancer Health Equity Consortium (SC CHEC), they were getting time in the lab and coursework covering some of the thorniest issues facing the cancer community: namely, disparities in cancer outcomes among different groups of people and how to fix them.

Marvella Ford, Ph.D., associate director for population sciences and cancer disparities at Hollings, leads the group. For Ford, it's about providing the mentoring and opportunities that underrepresented students might not otherwise have. Throughout the program, she ensures that students not only learn research methods and presentation skills but also interpersonal skills like job interviewing and how to communicate over email.

Coming up with solutions for cancer

— whether it's new treatments, improved treatments, better screenings or better ways of delivering care — will require the talents of people from all backgrounds.

Diversity, said Benjamin Toll, Ph.D., associate director for education and training at Hollings, buoys us all.

"It lifts us all up. If we have a more diverse base, it helps us all to have all these different viewpoints," he said. "Our training and education benefits from diverse backgrounds because all of these various trainees, they give us new perspectives."

The undergraduates come from the University of South Carolina and three historically Black colleges and universities — Voorhees University, Claflin University and South Carolina State University. Once on the MUSC campus, they're assigned to a researcher based upon the interests they've indicated.

Latavia Fields, a rising senior at Claflin, noted that she is torn between applying to medical school or pharmacy school upon graduation. She was assigned to the lab of Patrick Woster, Ph.D., where she's getting exposure to both professions, thanks to the varying backgrounds of the people working there.

She's working on a project that mixes chemotherapy drugs with marker inhibitors to try to reduce inflammation in neuroblastoma tumors in children.

"We believe that the more inflamed the tumor is, the higher chance of death," she

explained. "We believe we can create a drug to reduce inflammation so it better responds to treatment."

Adam Pressley, a rising junior at Voorhees, is interested in public health. He's working with Ford this summer to evaluate the SC AMEN program, a community outreach program that educates Black men about their increased risk of prostate cancer and steps they can take to reduce that risk.

As part of his research, he attended an SC AMEN event in Holly Hill. Men participating

in the program take a survey before and after the educational component to gauge their knowledge of prostate cancer and the available screenings. They're then followed for three months to see whether they get screened for prostate cancer.

"We're trying to determine whether the data results of the post-test show a positive effect on the population and if the seminars help to decrease the disparities and increase

See **INTERNS** on page 14

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**Judge Irv Condon**

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## DENTAL *Continued from Page Seven*

MUSC Health CEO Patrick Cawley, M.D.

"This vision highlights the importance of oral health as it relates to overall health and wellbeing," Davis said.

Cole focused on the efforts that helped make that vision a reality. "It's an honor to be able to lead so many talented and dedicated people that are working hard to make a difference in people's lives. There's just one example, you know, so those are words from the heart. Thank you for what you do."

Board chairman James Lemon, D.M.D., was also on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony, as were Gene Hong, M.D., chief physician executive for MUSC Health and Lisa Saladin, PT, Ph.D., executive vice president of Academic Affairs and provost.

Huja said that while the West Ashley dental clinic is the first one not on MUSC's downtown campus, and this growth will continue. And it will serve as a symbol of what's possible for patients. "Why is this clinic important? The connection between systemic and oral health is epitomized in this integrated model of care, which MUSC will offer here at West Ashley Medical Pavilion."

Ann Edwards said the clinic brings a much-needed option of dental expertise backed by an academic medical center to people who live in West Ashley. "It's just wonderful that you have come to them. And that is so important. Thank you, each and every one who made it possible."

To make an appointment at the MUSC Health West Ashley Medical Pavilion's dental clinic, call 843-876-9267.

## CHAMPIONS *Continued from Page One*

You change lives. Our researchers advance scientific discovery and have the potential to change the future. Each of you changes what is possible every day, and we value your unique contributions. Our faculty represent our most valuable asset, and we don't take the time often enough to express our gratitude, so we thank each of you. We're aware of the many pressures and challenges you face; we thank you for your perseverance, your resilience and your commitment to excellence."

Saladin also took a few moments to recognize MUSC's first provost James W. Colbert, M.D., and his commitment, leadership and vision. She also recognized the presence of his family – son, John Colbert, and daughter, Elizabeth Colbert Bush, and husband, Klaus Bush.

Keynote speaker Tenelle O. Jones, a licensed marriage and family therapist and addictions counselor is the clinician for MUSC's Resiliency Program. it addresses stress, anxiety and burnout and builds individual and team resilience.

Jones' presentation, "More than a Champion: Still Rising and Shining!," focused on self-awareness and purpose.

Jones led attendees through a gratitude breathing exercise and screened singers Carrie Underwood and Ludacris' "I am a Champion" motivational music video. Jones shared ways in which faculty members can achieve their own personal resilience successes with ideas spelling out the word "championship."

"You matter, and you can take care of yourself today, tomorrow and every day," Jones concluded.

The program then turned to the celebration of outstanding faculty with MUSC's highest honors and awards. MUSC President David J. Cole, M.D., FACS, assisted in the presentation and recognition of all honorees.

In Cole's closing remarks, he praised these 12 high-achieving scholars, educators, clinicians and researchers for their passion, teaching, scientific rigor and compassion.

"It's important to underscore how critical each one of you are, and in totality, how we all work together in this moment of transformation. Be clear, we are in a moment of transformation in this institution and certainly in American health in the United States. It's not simple work. It's not easy. It's a lot of work. But it's important. Also, I know that you are what differentiates us as an enterprise like MUSC from being just another

### 2022 MUSC Faculty Awards

- ❑ Teaching Excellence Educator-Lecturer
  - Amanda K. Giles, OTD
- ❑ Teaching Excellence Educator Mentor (Academic Scholarship)
  - Brandon D. Brown, M.D.
- ❑ Teaching Excellence Educator Mentor (Clinical Professional)
  - Marc E. Heincelman, M.D.
- ❑ Teaching Excellence Developing Teacher
  - Elizabeth A. Brown, Ph.D.
- ❑ Excellence in Interprofessional Education & Collaborative Practice Award
  - Patti A. Hart, DNP, R.N.
- ❑ Population Health
  - Allison R. Eckard, M.D.
- ❑ Outstanding Clinician
  - Jason R. Buckley, M.D.
- ❑ Developing Scholar
  - Antonis Kourtidis, Ph.D.
- ❑ Peggy Schachte Research Mentor
  - Kenneth J. Ruggiero, Ph.D.
- ❑ Distinguished Faculty Service Award
  - T. Karl Byrne, M.D., Kimberly S. Davis, M.D. and Paul R. Lambert, M.D.

good or maybe excellent community health system. You are what makes the difference. So, thank you for who you are what you bring to the table. Your dedication to the mission is palpable every day. Perseverance is part of that. Your dedication to work and ability to do that – I would acknowledge and let you understand and say thank you for what you've do!" said Cole.

#### TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

- ❑ Amanda K. Giles, OTD, associate professor, College of Health Professions Educator-Lecturer

Giles fosters a safe, welcoming student environment. She's approachable and compassionate while conveying her enthusiasm for neurorehabilitation and OT education. She empowers OT students to advocate for their unique role in the clinical setting by sharing their expertise in neurorehabilitation. As an instructor for several complex neurorehabilitation courses and labs, she exhibits extensive knowledge about the role of OT supporting specific patient populations and consistently updates her curriculum with new resources and research. Her words, actions and assignments reveal her deep empathy for students' well-



*Photo by Jonathan Coultas*

**College of Health Professions' Dr. Elizabeth Brown is presented with the Teaching Excellence Developing Teacher Award by provost Lisa Saladin and MUSC President David Cole on Aug. 16.**

being. She's recognized for her vast clinical knowledge, effective teaching strategies, unparalleled rapport with students and commitment to professionalism.

- ❑ Brandon D. Brown, M.D., assistant professor, College of Medicine Educator-Mentor, Academic Scholarship

Brown stands out as an academic mentor for his comprehensive, outstanding complex medical care and his ability to teach optimal for growth and development of the learner and genuine humility. He serves as assistant dean for the pre-clerkship clinical integration, Department of Family Medicine. He's been an outspoken advocate for learners with his faculty peers describing him as a master teacher and leader of curricular innovation. Through curricular innovation and inspirational teaching relationships, Brown has been a role model for teaching excellence.

- ❑ Marc E. Heincelman, M.D., associate professor, College of Medicine Educator-Mentor, Clinical Professional

Heincelman has made extraordinary contributions in teaching, mentoring and innovative program development. His expertise and effectiveness as an outstanding clinical educator has led to his promotion to several educational leadership roles at MUSC, including as director of the internal medicine clerkship. In that role, he's taken on the task of developing a clinical reasoning curriculum for students in their third and fourth years of medical school. By building rapport with students, he helps them to navigate clinical decision-making in a compassionate setting that encourages discussion and fosters clinical

thinking. He creates an environment of trust and understanding while distilling difficult concepts into clear and concise instruction and open dialogue.

- ❑ Elizabeth A. Brown, Ph.D., assistant professor, College of Health Professions Developing Teacher

Brown inspires students to engage in important and challenging topics that impact most patients in the health care system. In fall of 2019, Brown began implementing a modified privilege walk as a means for her students to learn how privilege, race ethnicity, racism and social class impact health equity. She mentored a student to share the student's perspectives from this activity at the annual Student Research Day and her student won the health humanities award for her work for two years in a row. The student describes Brown as the epitome of an exemplary educator, and it shows in their success stories. Brown is honored for her demonstrable dedication to students' success, educational contributions in the areas of social determinants of health and ethics in health care.

#### FACULTY AWARDS

- ❑ Patti A. Hart, DNP, R.N., assistant professor, College of Nursing Excellence in Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice Award

Hart is an outstanding role model of collaborative teamwork and leader of interprofessional education. She's consistently taught MUSC's introductory interprofessional course and supported

**CHAMPIONS** *Continued from Page Twelve*

innovative interprofessional education to participation in the Teamworks program – a collaborative effort between the Office of Interprofessional Initiatives and the MUSC Health system, which engages student observation and participation in teamwork-based quality improvements in clinical units. As chief nursing officer of MUSC Health-Charleston Division, she's dedicated to improving hospital quality and advocates for improved patient safety through interprofessional teamwork.

□ **Allison R. Eckard, M.D.,**  
**professor, College of Medicine**  
**Population Health Award**

Eckard is recognized for her unparalleled leadership, courage and impact on South Carolina's population health during the COVID-19 pandemic. She became division chief of pediatric infectious diseases at the height of the pandemic in July of 2020. Her sense of purpose, training and infectious diseases experience prepared her to lead during COVID-19. In December of 2020, she became medical director of the Back to Business School Program, where she led a comprehensive mitigation strategy for schools to follow to address COVID-19. Her leadership during the pandemic earned her the Golden Mask Award from the Charleston County School District. In spring of 2021, she organized and moderated a mental health miniseries designed to help families to navigate mental health issues during the pandemic. She was awarded the 2021 Charleston Rotary Community Impact Award for these efforts. Eckard was recognized for her servant leadership and tireless efforts in contributing to keeping children and families safe in the Palmetto State.

□ **Jason R. Buckley, M.D.,**  
**associate professor, College of Medicine**  
**Outstanding Clinician Award**

A pediatric cardiac intensive care expert, Buckley is the clinical champion for the PC-4 cardiac arrest prevention initiative and has led several local quality improvement initiatives, including a pediatric catheter cardiac catheterization lab emergency team, a monthly heart center M&M conference and pediatric cardiac specific rapid response team. He's a prolific researcher who is interested in improving outcomes for children undergoing cardiac operations. He's served as the principal investigator for two multicenter studies for pediatric cardiology outcomes, where one study has earned

him an outstanding investigator award. He's recognized for his contributions as a physician, leader, mentor, clinical problem solver and integral part of the MUSC heart center team.

**RESEARCH AWARDS**

□ **Antonis Kourtidis, Ph.D.,**  
**assistant professor, College of Medicine**  
**Developing Scholar Award**

Kourtidis was duly recruited by the Department of Regenerative Medicine and Cell Biology and MUSC Hollings Cancer Center in 2016 for his ability as a researcher and paradigm-shifting work on the cell biology of tumor progression in colon cancer. He's driven to solve clinical problems and brings a diversity approach to address his research questions. His research program has culminated into discoveries that have increased the understanding of how cell junctions interact with RNA-I processing machinery to play a direct role in regulating gene expression. His groundbreaking findings have been published to international critical acclaim. He's been described as the epitome of scholarliness with an outstanding ability to convey his knowledge to both peers and students alike.

□ **Kenneth J. Ruggiero, Ph.D.,**  
**professor, College of Nursing**  
**Peggy Schachte Research Mentor Award**

An accomplished national scholar, Ruggiero serves as the SmartState Endowed Chair of the Technology and Application Center for Healthy Lifestyles (TACHL). He is a mentor for numerous grants, including NIH minority fellowships and NIH VA career development awards and serves as a primary or co-mentor on eight active K-23 awards. Approximately 70% of his publications are co-authored with mentees. He's been described as an enjoyable supervisor and team leader who intentionally creates a safe and constructive work environment and genuinely cares about the well-being of the team members.

**DISTINGUISHED FACULTY SERVICE AWARD**

□ **T. Karl Byrne, MBBCh,**  
**professor, College of Medicine**

Byrne is a professor of surgery who has served patients, students and trainees for 30 years. Since his arrival at MUSC, he has served as an exemplary teacher in the OR and doing rounds. He's admired by colleagues and is recognized nationally for his expertise

in innovation in bariatric surgery. Among his clinical strengths is his adaptability as technology has evolved. A trauma surgeon with a strong interest in bariatric surgery, he developed as a leader in the field. Over his career, general surgery has transitioned from standard open abdominal procedures into the much less-invasive endoscopic procedure and most recently to the truly invasive surgery with the DaVinci Robot. With each change, Byrne has become a respective expert who is adept at passing his skills to trainees. He is also an honored teacher and mentor and researcher and scholar.

"Thank you for this award. I'd like to thank many people, including Dr. Fred Crawford who recruited me to MUSC, current surgery chairman Dr. Prabhakar Baliga, MUSC President, Dr. David Cole, and Kathy Cole and others who were here when my career started and helped me along the way. I'm grateful to my family – my wife and sons for

**Byrne**

their continued support," said Byrne.

□ **Kimberly S. Davis, M.D.,** professor,  
**College of Medicine**

A highly skilled leader, mentor and clinician, Davis' contributions to MUSC and South Carolina have impacted patients, colleagues and trainees. Her expertise and leadership in health informatics has helped to create the first iterations of MUSC's electronic medical records system and led to the adoption of MUSC's earliest patient portals. Her clinical acumen is synergized with her knowledge of informatics and leadership skills. She's been a clinical informatics medical director for more than a decade, playing a critical role in the implementation of Epic across the health system. In recent years, she's led the Endocrine Division, serving as the chief medical informatics

**Davis**

See **CHAMPIONS** on page 14

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*~ David P. Kent*



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INTERNS *Continued from Page Eleven*

the prostate cancer screenings,” he said.

Toll said it’s wonderful to have the students on campus.

“These students are a breath of fresh air,” he said. “They are so excited about the future. They care about academic medicine and cancer research.

“I do think it’s bidirectional, such that we train them, but we also learn from them,” he added. “And that’s important. Our trainees are our future. We need them to carry on.”

The Hollings pipeline program actually reaches all the way down to the high school level. That’s where Fields first met Ford.

Fields was a student at Burke High School on the Charleston peninsula when Ford and the late Dennis Watson, Ph.D., began teaching a two-year cancer program to students in the health sciences track.

She had always been interested in medicine, from the time she was a little girl at her pediatrician appointments, and family members’ health problems increased her interest. After graduating from Burke in 2019, she went to college as a biology major and chemistry minor. In fact, 88% of the group that participated in the Hollings program went on to STEM majors at four-year colleges. Though she’s still deciding between medicine and pharmacy, she hopes to apply to MUSC.

Toll said Fields’ journey exemplifies what Ford and MUSC would like to see: develop the talent right here in South Carolina with the goal of keeping people in the state so they



Photo by Kristin Lee

**In addition to neuroblastoma research, Latavia Fields has been talking to labmates to find out their experiences in medical school and pharmacy school as she decides on a career path.**

serve the communities they grew up in.

Fields, for her part, credited Ford for keeping in touch with the Burke students and alerting them to educational and

professional opportunities.

“She’s a big part of why I’m here today,” Fields said. “She’s been a big part in all of our lives.”

CHAMPIONS *Continued from Page Thirteen*

officer and as division director of general internal medicine. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she provided leadership to provide the best health care in Charleston and throughout the state. She’s an outstanding influential mentor to her trainees and colleagues. She facilitates collaboration within her division and beyond and continually advocates for developing and promoting junior faculty members.

“This is truly an honor. I’m so proud to be a part of the MUSC family as a clinician, educator and leader supporting MUSC across all of its missions. MUSC has given me many opportunities in years to grow and lead across those missions. The driver for me has always been to do the right thing for MUSC, my colleagues and learners while keeping the patient at center. Thank you for the recognition reflected by this award. I hope to continue to contribute to our goal of academic excellence at MUSC,” said Davis in a prerecorded video to the audience.

**Paul R. Lambert, M.D.,**  
professor, College of Medicine  
Distinguished Faculty Service Award

An exemplary physician, leader, scholar, colleague and mentor, Lambert has given his patients, MUSC, South Carolina and his profession outstanding and sustained service and commitment. Since 1999, when he was named chair of MUSC’s Department of Otolaryngology, he’s expanded his department to national prominence – currently ranked No. 15 in the country. Lambert is described as the

“consummate surgeon” – an expert in all areas in his field, true humanitarian of the communities, fantastic mentor to his trainees and man of great faith. As an MUSC faculty colleague, he has provided leadership in much-needed times of transition and has held the highest leadership roles in his profession. Those who’ve served with him at MUSC and nationally have cited his wisdom, grace, humility, ethics and equanimity.

“This is a distinct honor for me to receive this award,” said Lambert. “We make important decisions in life, and at times, they can be pivotable decisions. Those critical career decisions can be described as a pilgrimage. Webster’s dictionary describes a pilgrimage as an important, and sometime uncertain, journey and course of life. To me both of those definitions apply. It was the best decision for me to leave the University of Virginia to come to MUSC. These last 23 years have been amazing. Our achievements can be attributed to the strong support of leadership and our incredible faculty. Over the years, we’ve been able to attract the best and brightest talent from across the country, and I’m pleased to lead them day in and day out. Forever my professional career will be defined by my tenure here at MUSC. I’m incredibly appreciative to MUSC for the many doors and opportunities that have been opened. Thank you again.”



Lambert

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**MONKEYPOX** *Continued from Page One*

Lowcountry region for DHEC.

"However, that generous arrangement will be unworkable if we exceed the limited capacity of our state lab," Curry said.

Right now, most of the people who are being diagnosed with monkeypox are men who have sex with men. "It's very clear that if you're a sexually active gay man, you should try to get a vaccine. You're the absolute highest-risk group," Curry said.

"If you have skin-to-skin contact with a known case of monkeypox, DHEC will also get you access to these vaccines because they can work even after exposure. Monkeypox ranges from a mild illness to a three to four-week ordeal where you can't sit down, swallow food, or both. So there's no reason not to vaccinate those clearly highest-risk individuals."

People can find out if they're eligible for the vaccine by calling the South Carolina Department of Health Environmental Control's CareLine at (855) 472-3432. DHEC is not recommending the vaccine, called Jynneos, for the general public.

So how are people getting monkeypox? Curry said the virus spreads through contact with bodily fluids, including semen, and through skin-to-skin contact with an infected

person. "We need to be honest that it's probably both sexually and nonsexually transmitted, right?"

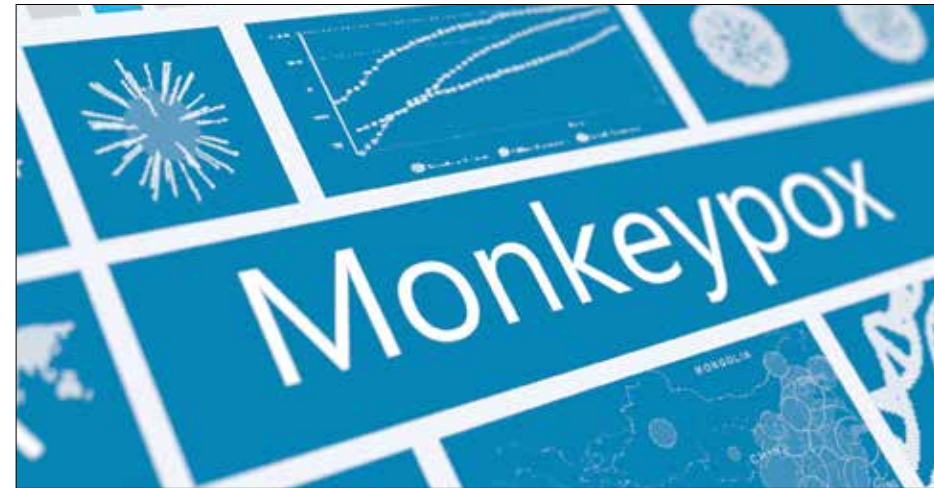
That means that while men who have sex with men make up about 95% of all diagnosed cases, they aren't the only ones affected.

"Kids don't have sex, at least not ones of the age that they're starting to come down with monkeypox. And animals don't have sex with people, and now dogs are starting to get it. So yeah, this is clearly spread via many routes, but it clearly takes very sustained non-casual contact."

He said the virus may eventually spread more widely outside of men who have sex with men. "That's one potential. It may just become a cause of a pustular rash illness in all the population. It may also just continue to confine itself mostly to men who have sex with men, like syphilis and HIV do, but still occasionally break out into other populations. Or it may cause an intermediate situation where it predominates in one population with occasional breakouts into others."

Curry said that physicians at MUSC Health have taken care of five monkeypox patients. Four out of five were men who have sex with men.

"Everyone should worry about monkeypox — but only a little bit. Sexually active gay men



### The first cases of monkeypox in South Carolina were reported in early July.

with more than one partner should worry about it just as much as about HIV and sexually transmitted infections. Heterosexually identified people and people that are not in contact with known cases should worry maybe the least for now, but only if they get a pox-like illness or they're feverish, and they get a terrible sore throat and some blistering lesions."

Curry said MUSC Health, one of only three health systems in the state with infectious diseases experts, is well-equipped to treat people with monkeypox. "Thanks to our CDC

and DHEC partners, we are prepositioned with the antiviral treatment. So like if somebody does have severe infection and needs to be treated with tecovirimat (TPOXX), that therapy is actually available to us. We have it in our pharmacy."

But he encouraged people at low risk of getting monkeypox to keep things in perspective. "If you're feeling well and just walking around the state of South Carolina, then no, you should not be consumed with worry about monkeypox."



### Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Level: Intermediate

	1				2	9		
						7		
2				9				4
9			1	2		3		
3			4					
1	4				6		7	
7	8			5			1	
								8
		2	9	1		6		

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